



that Bozizé himself was not convinced about his own anti-Muslim rhetoric or that he was ‘pacting with the devil’ for purely opportunistic reasons?

Last but not least a sort of epilogue that touches on interreligious conviviality under current president Faustin-Archange Touadéra would have complemented the rich analysis provided in this book that is recommended reading for all interested (a) in CAR’s political and social history, (b) autochthony discourses more broadly. The book fills a vacuum and is thought-provoking; it provides the reader with a comparatively short text, but extended notes, bibliography and index. A translation into French would be nice to see – in order to engage with actors on the ground who may not always question what is involved when they call themselves ‘vrais Centrafricains’ – at the expense of others.

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## **The West African Revival: Faith Tabernacle Congregation on the Guinea Coast, 1918–1929**

**By Adam Mohr Baylor University Press, 2023**

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Adam Mohr examines the history of the Faith Tabernacle congregation in Philadelphia and this church’s involvement in the ‘West African Revival’. This time of intense religious fervour in the Guinea Coast is seen in the proliferation of prophetic-healing and Pentecostal churches that followed the influenza pandemic of 1918–19. Mohr argues that this small American denomination was responsible for this revival, and he traces the history of the movement from its origins at the end of the 19th century to its expansion in West Africa in the 1920s. This study fills gaps in our historical knowledge. Its strength lies in its extensive primary source evidence (particularly archival material from the original letters to and from Ambrose Clark, the movement’s leader at the time) that have never previously been examined. The connections between Faith Tabernacle and West African Pentecostalism, although referred to in various scholarly publications, are comprehensively explored for the first time in this research. Secondary sources are mainly used to sketch the background to and the context of the various events described both in the USA and in West Africa.

The author points out that because of the relatively short period of time covered (1918–1929), the chapters are not chronologically arranged, except for chapters 1 and 6, which cover the periods before 1918 and after 1929

respectively. Other chapters cover particular themes. Chapter 2 traces the healing movement that followed the influenza pandemic and Faith Tabernacle's role along the West African coast. Chapter 3 covers Faith Tabernacle as an anti-witchcraft cult, while chapter 4 deals with the economic issues arising from what the church named 'God's Financial Plan'. Chapter 5 describes the persecution that followed the church's healing practices, including its opposition to all forms of medicine. Chapter 6 follows the aftermath of the disappearance of Faith Tabernacle as a religious force in West Africa, and the subsequent formation of West African Pentecostal churches.

The author claims that 1929 marked the end of this revival and argues that the 'West African' revival (directly involving Faith Tabernacle) should be separated from what he calls the 'Babalola revival'. He suggests that the latter was a healing revival centred to some extent on the charisma of a single leader. It is somewhat misleading, however, to state that the 'West African revival' stopped, and a *separate* movement started with Babalola in 1930. There are far too many synchronous and diachronous connections and networks for this argument to be sustained. The 'Babalola revival' was not distinct either. Mohr admits that the networks established by Faith Tabernacle leaders were continued in the Pentecostal churches. These various healing 'revivals' should rather be seen in a continuum at this time of religious ferment, especially in the British colonies of Nigeria and the Gold Coast. Although Mohr shows convincingly that Faith Tabernacle no longer had direct involvement after 1929, there were other African healing movements in the 1920s in which Faith Tabernacle was not involved. Faith Tabernacle played a very significant role, but separating these movements is unnecessary. Chapters 6 and 7 make the continuation of the West African revival movements into the 1930s and 1940s clear and in the author's own words, the West African Revival 'never really ended but continued to grow and expand' (p. 31).

The significance of this book is twofold. First, there is a 'Pentecostalisation' of West African Christianity taking place today, affecting churches started by missionaries as well as African initiated ones. Some of the biggest congregations in the world are found in this region, especially in Nigeria and Ghana, so that as Mohr observes, Africa is now a centre of world Christianity, and perhaps no more so than the West African region. Thorough historical research like this is long overdue. Second, this book focuses for the first time on the significance of Faith Tabernacle on the emergence of West African Pentecostalism, and tangentially, its common origins with Southern African Pentecostalism in the Zion movement of John Alexander Dowie near Chicago, of which Ambrose Clark was once a part. It makes fascinating reading, and histories of African Christianity will always be indebted to this benchmarking research.

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